

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS
Chester Area School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2005-2006**

Team Members: Donna Huber, Education Specialist and Chris Sargent, Education Specialists

Dates of On Site Visit: February 21, 2006

Date of Report: March 20, 2006

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Surveys
- LEA flow through funds request information
- Comprehensive plan
- Student progress data
- Information on home schools students
- State data
- Screening information
- Budget information
- Screening

Promising practice

The steering committee concluded the district uses data-based decision-making procedures to review and analyze their progress towards the state performance goals and indicators. A school data retreat occurs as soon as it receives the test data from the state to analyze their practices.

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district meets requirement under general supervision. The district has policies and procedures in place which describe an identified system for receiving and documenting referrals which complies with state regulations. The school district provides services for children with disabilities that are eligible for special education. The school district has a good communication system between the private school and themselves to ensure special education and related services are provided in accordance with the requirements of IDEA.

The school district reviews and analyzes discipline data and revises policies and procedures if there are discrepancies occurring between the long-term suspension and expulsion rates for children with and without disabilities.

The school district ensures they employ personnel who are fully licensed or certified to work with children with disabilities. The district implements procedures to determine personnel development needs and takes appropriate action to meet those identified needs. The high school has in-service for the teachers at the beginning of each school year to go over the special education requirements and modifications utilized for the students.

Validation Results**Promising practice**

Through interview and file review the monitoring team cannot validate the steering committee's findings as a promising practice. The analyzing of district data to promote progress in the state-wide performance plan is required.

Through interview and observation the monitoring team determined the district provides a wide variety programs to meet the educational needs of their students. The district implements the STARS reading and math programs for all students Kindergarten through 6th grade. The use of Success Maker for both reading and math three times per week for 30 minutes sessions has helped boost scores. After school homework help four days a week at the elementary level has helped with reinforcing skills and school work completion. This program is available for all students. For high school students who are not successful in the regular high school setting and need an alternative program option, AIM High located in Madison is available to them. This educational option can be either school or student driven.

The district also provides a unique educational opportunity for students in grades 9-12 to earn a high school diploma from their home through Chester Area Cyber School, which is an intranet system. Presently seventy-five students living in eight different colonies are participating in this program. There is no cost to the students except for a \$20 per year fee for the lease of a desktop computer. Classes are taught by certified instructors and follow the rigorous South Dakota State Standards. Students completing this program will earn a high school diploma through Chester Area School District.

Meets requirements

Through file review the monitoring team validates the steering committee findings under the provision general supervision.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:17:03. Annual report of children served. In its annual report of children served, the division shall indicate the number of children with disabilities receiving special education and related services on December 1 of that school year.

ARSD 24:05:24.01:01. Students with disabilities defined. Students with disabilities are students evaluated in accordance with chapter 24:05:25 as having autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, hearing impairment, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairments, emotional disturbance, specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, traumatic brain injury, or visual impairments including blindness, which adversely affects educational performance, and who, because of those disabilities, need special education or special education and related services.

Through file review the monitoring team determined two students reported on the Chester Area School District 2004 child count did not meet the South Dakota eligibility guidelines for the disability category listed on the child count.

For one student identified under the disability category 560 the student's evaluation did not support the disability category. According to the South Dakota Eligibility Criteria a student can be identified under this category if the student meets at least six of the required characteristics with at least two of the characteristics from subdivision (1), one characteristic from subdivision (2), and one characteristic from subdivision (3). In the student's most recent evaluation report the student was diagnosed with Asperger Disorder and did not meet the above mentioned criteria. The student had a total of five characteristics identified; two in subdivision (1), none in subdivision (2), and two in subdivision (3). The evaluation results for this student could meet the eligibility criteria to support the disability category 505.

For one student who was identified on the 2004 child count under the disability category of 535 there was not sufficient evaluation to support this category. In the psychological report there was no evidence of gross or fine motor evaluations or adaptive behavior evaluations completed which is required to support the disability category of 535. The 2003 psychological report identifies there is a physical impairment and states the student qualified under the category 555 in the past and continues to qualify under the category 555. The evaluation completed on this student in 2003 is sufficiently comprehensive to support the 555 category. Through interview with staff the student does have a medical condition which may affect the performance in the general curriculum and had a full time aide for note taking assistance and extended time for assignments. But the evaluations conducted in 2003 do not support the disability category of 535.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Numbers of children screened
- Preschool age
- School-age
- Budget information

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the school district provides a free appropriate public education to all eligible children with disabilities. The school district/agency uses positive and proactive procedures to address misconduct such as school wide discipline policies, instructional/related services, conflict management, and behavior intervention strategies. The district/agency has a tracking system in place to monitor the number and frequency of removals of students with disabilities for disciplinary reasons and has trained administrative staff on these policies.

Validation Results**Meets requirements**

Through file review and staff interview the monitoring team validates all steering committee findings under free appropriate public education.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State tables information
- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Budget information
- Initial referral information from file reviews

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district meets requirement under appropriate evaluation. The district provides appropriate written notice and obtains informed consent before assessments are administered to a child as part of an evaluation or re-evaluation. The district ensures the evaluation or re-evaluation procedures and instruments meet the minimum requirements. The district ensures the proper identification of students with disabilities through the evaluation process and re-evaluations are conducted in accordance with all procedural requirements to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility.

Validation Results**Meets requirements**

Through file review the monitoring team validates some of the steering committee findings under appropriate evaluation. The district obtains consent for evaluation/re-evaluation through the use of the state approved prior notice/consent for evaluation. The evaluation instruments meet minimum requirement.

Through file review the monitoring team could not validate the district consistently ensures proper identification of students with disabilities through the evaluation process and that re-evaluations are conducted in accordance with all procedural requirements to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility. This is addressed under Principle 1, General Supervision.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State tables
- Teacher file reviews
- Comprehensive plan
- Parental rights document
- Consent and prior notice forms
- FERPA

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district consistently ensures procedural safeguards are followed. Parents are informed of their parental rights under the IDEA. The district ensures the parents have been fully informed in their native language or another mode of communication of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought. The school district ensures the rights of a child are protected if no parent can be identified. The district provides the parents with the right to inspect and review all educational records concerning the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child and the provision of a FAPE. The district has policies and procedures in place for responding to complaint actions that ensure compliance and policies and procedures are in place for responding to requests for due process that ensures compliance.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through file review and interview the monitoring team validates the following steering committee findings under procedural safeguards. The district does consistently inform parents of their rights. Parents are allowed to inspect and review their child's file. The district has policies and procedures in place for responding to complaint actions that ensure compliance and policies and procedures are in place for responding to requests for due process that ensures compliance. The district also has a list of surrogate parents on file.

Needs Improvement

Through staff interview the monitoring team determined the district does have a list of persons on file that may serve as surrogate parents but has not trained the person/s in their duties. The district needs to address the training of their surrogate parents.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- State data tables
- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Written notice form

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district meets requirement under the provision Individualized Education Program. The district has policies and procedures in place to ensure an appropriate IEP is developed and in effect for each eligible student. The district ensures that written notice is provided for all IEP meetings and includes all required content. The district ensures appropriate IEP team membership and IEPs contain all required content. Transition plans for students are a coordinated set of activities, reflecting student strengths and interests, to prepare them for post school activities.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through file review the monitoring team validates most of the steering committee findings under the provision Individualized Education Program. The district policies and procedures ensure appropriate team membership at all IEP meetings and that IEPs are developed and in effect for all eligible students. The district consistently provides written prior notice. The district consistently ensures that transition plans are addressed for students age 16 and older and are a coordinated set of activities.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.02. Development, review, and revision of individualized education program. In developing, reviewing, and revising each student's individualized education program, the team shall consider the strengths of the student and the concerns of the parents for enhancing the education of their student, the results of the initial or most recent evaluation of the student, and as appropriate, the results of the student's performance on any general state or district-wide assessment programs. For each student beginning at age 16 or younger, if determined appropriate by the placement committee, a statement of the needed transition services, as defined in § 24:05:27:13.02, including postsecondary education, employment (including supported employment), adult services, independent living, or community participation.

In three of three transition files reviewed, a general or limited transition statement was provided in the present level of performance. Strengths and needs were not documented in all five areas of transition service areas.

In five of six files reviewed there was not a consistent clear link between goals, the strengths and needs listed on the present level of performance and the functional evaluation summary. For example, for one student the functional assessment indicated the student rushes through work; needs to work on basic math facts; whole number computation, adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing fractions; and vocabulary. The present level of performance recognizes that the student rushes through work and needs

to work on basic math. The student's only goal states "Student will demonstrate an improvement in attention to complete assignment." A second student's evaluation indicates the student is easily distracted, has difficulty in identifying pictures, colors, body parts, answering questions, naming objects, dressing, toileting, fine motor, memory and perceptual discrimination. This student's only two goals are, "Student will copy a given picture, letter, number, and first and last name." and "Student will answer wh-questions to recall details and tell events." A third student's present level of performance indicates the student has weaknesses in memory skill, comprehension, organizing thoughts for writing and explaining his answers clearly. Two of the three goals for this student do no link to the present level of performance in that they address the areas of math and writing with sentence structure, grammar and spelling. In a fourth student's file only two of the six goals link to the present level of performance.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Surveys
- File reviews
- Comprehensive plan
- State tables

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district meets requirements under the provision least restrictive environment. The information received through surveys and file reviews and other data indicate all students received services in the least restrictive environment with the supports they need for their successful participation.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through file review the monitoring team validates the steering committee findings under least restrictive environment.